

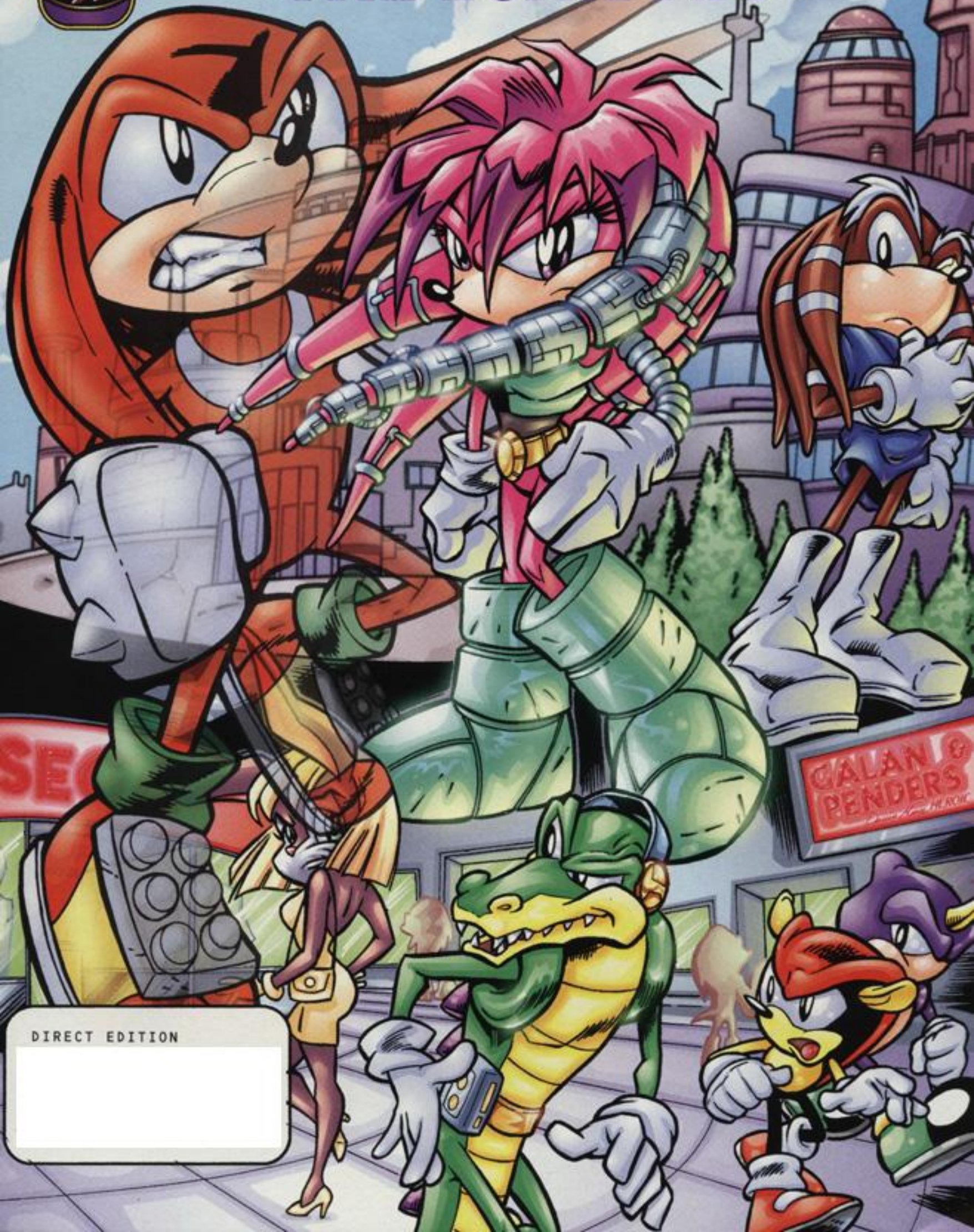
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KNUCKLES™

THE ECHIDNA



DIRECT EDITION

KNUCKLES™

BOOK TWENTY-SIX THE FIRST DATE

PART ONE OF THREE

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BORN TO THE MOST NOBLE OF ECHIDNA HOUSES, THE LATEST TO CONTINUE THE FAMILY HERITAGE AND RESPONSIBILITY AS GUARDIAN OF THE FLOATING ISLAND, DEFENDER OF ALL AGAINST THE FORCES OF EVIL FROM THE WORLD BEYOND AS WELL AS THOSE WHO WOULD THREATEN FROM WITHIN!

ARCHIE COMICS AND SEGA PRESENT... KNUCKLES THE ECHIDNA!

COME THE SPRINGTIME, WHEN FLOWERS BLOOM, BIRDS CHIRP AND BEES PRODUCE HONEY, WE FIND ONLY TWO TYPES OF CREATURES: THOSE IN LOVE AND THOSE WHO WISH TO THEY WERE IN LOVE. AND FOR THOSE NOT ENGAGED IN THE MORE PLEASURABLE PURSUITS, WE FIND THEM GATHERING TOGETHER TO DISCUSS THE MEANING OF LIFE AND ALL IT HAS TO OFFER IN ALL ITS VARIOUS AND ENDLESS PERMUTATIONS...

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HARD TO BELIEVE
THE CHARMSMAN IS
STILL GONE!

I FIGURED
HE'D COME 'ROUND
WAAAY BEFORE
THIS!

TIMES
HAVE CHANGED,
VECTOR!

CHARMY
GREW UP!

IT'S NOT
LIKE HE HAD
A CHOICE,
ESPY!



SURE, HE DID!
HE COULD'VE
RENOUNCED HIS
HERITAGE!

HAH!



GIVE UP THE STATUS--
THE FAMILY MOOLAH--
BEST SEATS IN THE HOUSE--
AND THE BABES ?!!

NO WAY,
JOSE!



HIS RESPONSIBILITIES
OUTWEIGH ALL OF THAT!

BESIDES, HE'S NOW
BETROTHED!

WHAAT ?!!



WHERE DID
YOU HEAR
THIS ?

YOU HOLDING
OUT ON US ?

C'MON,
ESPY!

GIVE IT TO US
STRAIGHT!



ALL RIGHT ALREADY!
I RECEIVED A LETTER
ANNOUNCING CHARMY'S ENGAGEMENT
TO A GIRL NAMED SAFRON!



ENGAGED?
AS IN--

Y'MEAN--
Y'MEAN--

I THINK
I'LL HURL!

RELAX,
VECTOR!

BESIDES, DIDN'T YOU JUST
LIST "BABES" AS A REASON NOT
TO GIVE UP HIS CROWN?



I DIDN'T
SAY ANYTHING
ABOUT
MARRIAGE!

C'MON,
VECTOR!

IT HAPPENS
TO EVERYONE
EVENTUALLY!

CHICKS,
MAN--
--NOTHIN'
BUT BAAAA
NEWS!

LOOK
AT THE
BRIGHT
SIDE,
VECTOR!
WHAT
GIRL WOULD
WANT YOU
ANYWAY?



Y'GOT THAT
BACKWARDS,
MIGHTY MAN--
--WHAT GIRL
COULD HANDLE
ME?

OH,
I COULD
THINK OF
AT LEAST
ONE!



WHO? THE
WITCH?!

IN YOUR
DREAMS!

JULIE-SU
WOULD BE MORE
THAN YOUR
MATCH!

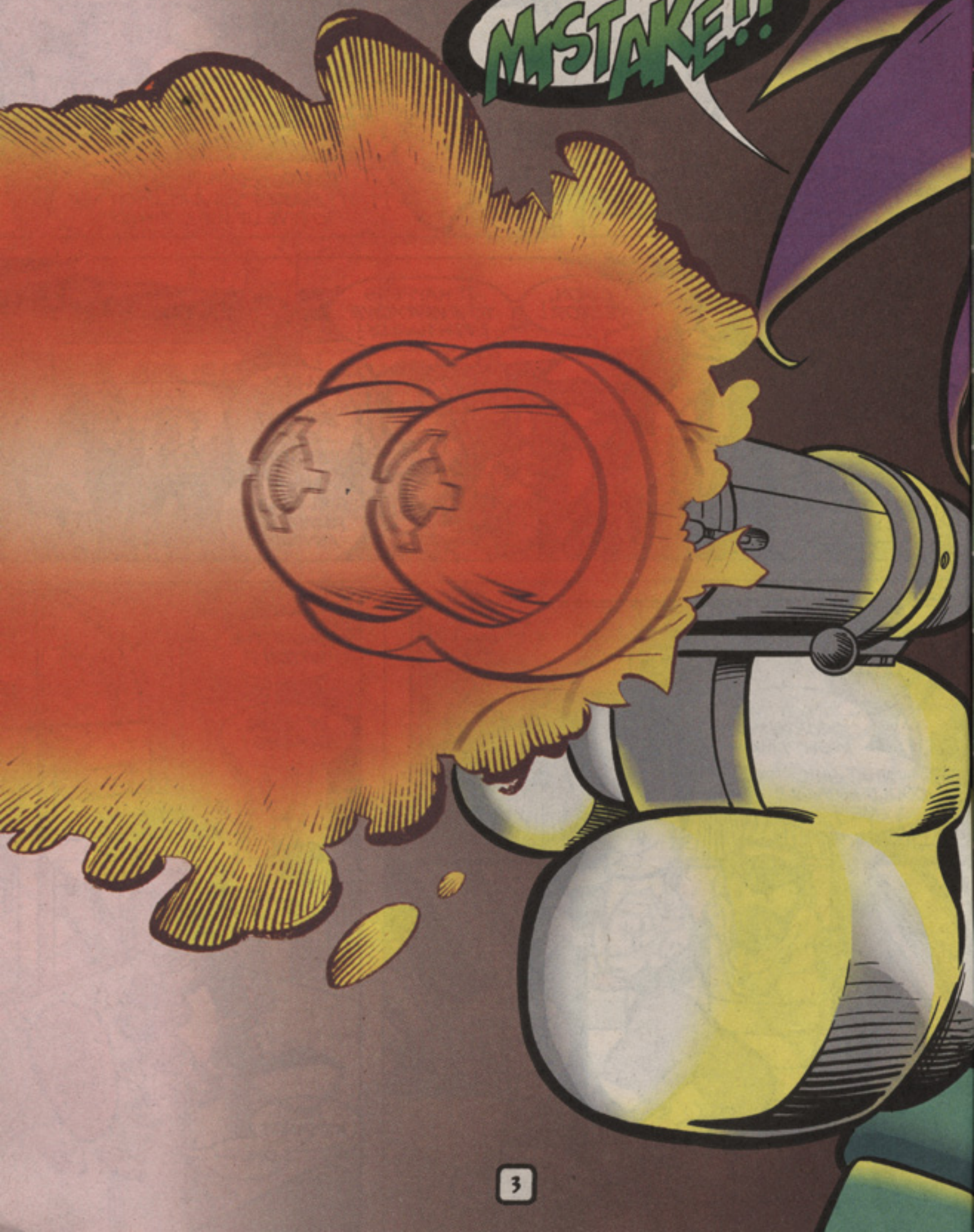
NO
KIDDING!

ONLY--

"-- SHE'S GOT HER SIGHTS
AIMED AT KNUCKLES!"

RUN OUT ON ME,
WILLYA!!!!*

BIIIING
MISTAKE!!

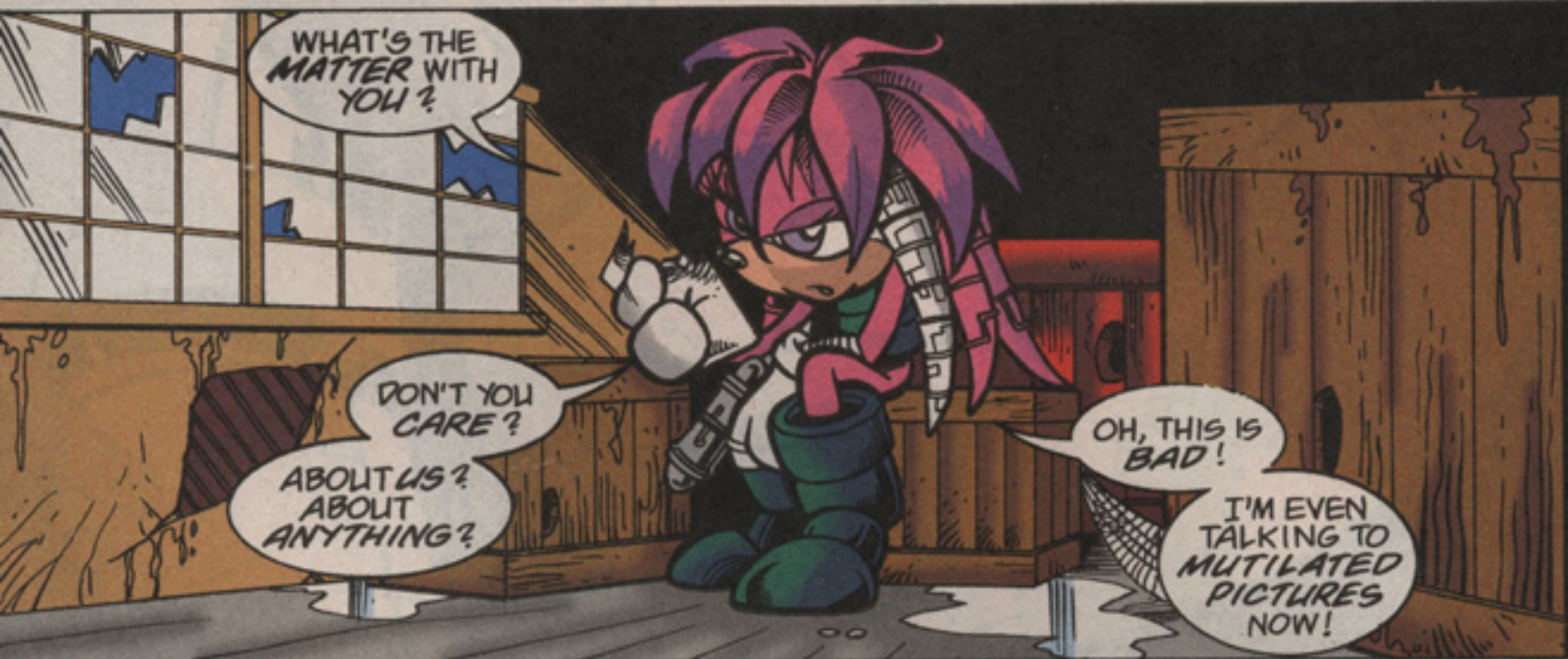
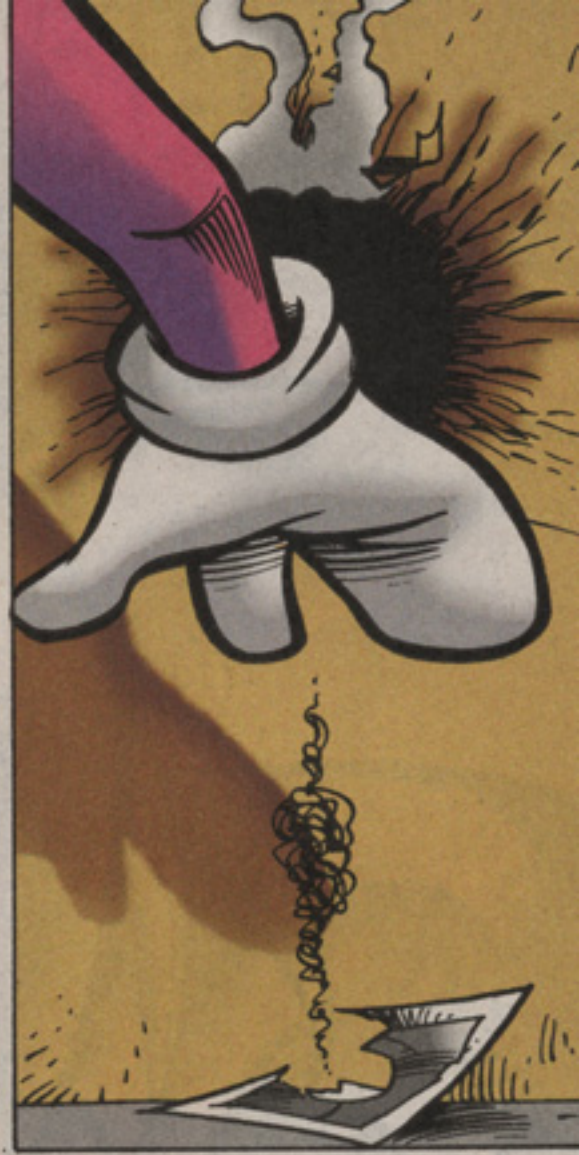
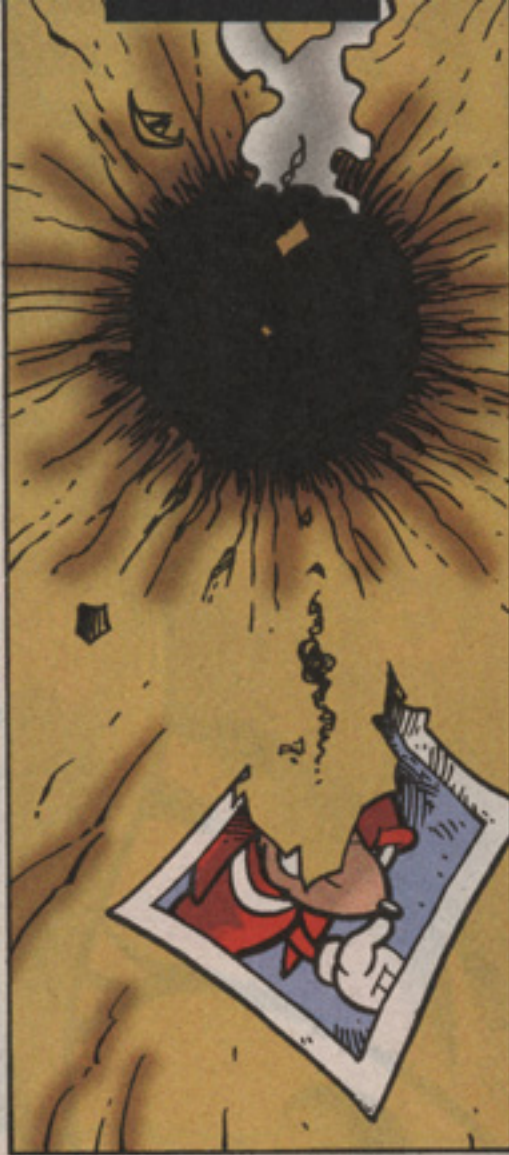


SHE L♥VES Y♥U..

(and you know that can't be bad!)



* JULIE-SU IS REFERRING TO THE ABRUPT WAY KNUCKLES LEFT HER AT THE BEGINNING OF LAST ISSUE--JUSTIN.



WHAT'S THE
MATTER WITH
YOU?

DON'T YOU
CARE?

ABOUT US?
ABOUT
ANYTHING?

OH, THIS IS
BAD!

I'M EVEN
TALKING TO
MUTILATED
PICTURES
NOW!



I NEED A
LIFE!

THE PROBLEM
IS--

--WHERE
DO YOU GET
ONE--



--WHEN ALL
YOU THINK ABOUT
IS HIM?

I HATE YOU,
KNUCKLES--

"--FOR NOT BEING HERE TO
TALK WITH ME RIGHT NOW!"

HERE! HAVE SOME
BREAKFAST!

WELL, WELL, WELL!
LOOK WHAT THE CAT
DRAGGED IN!

THANKS! I'M
STARVING!

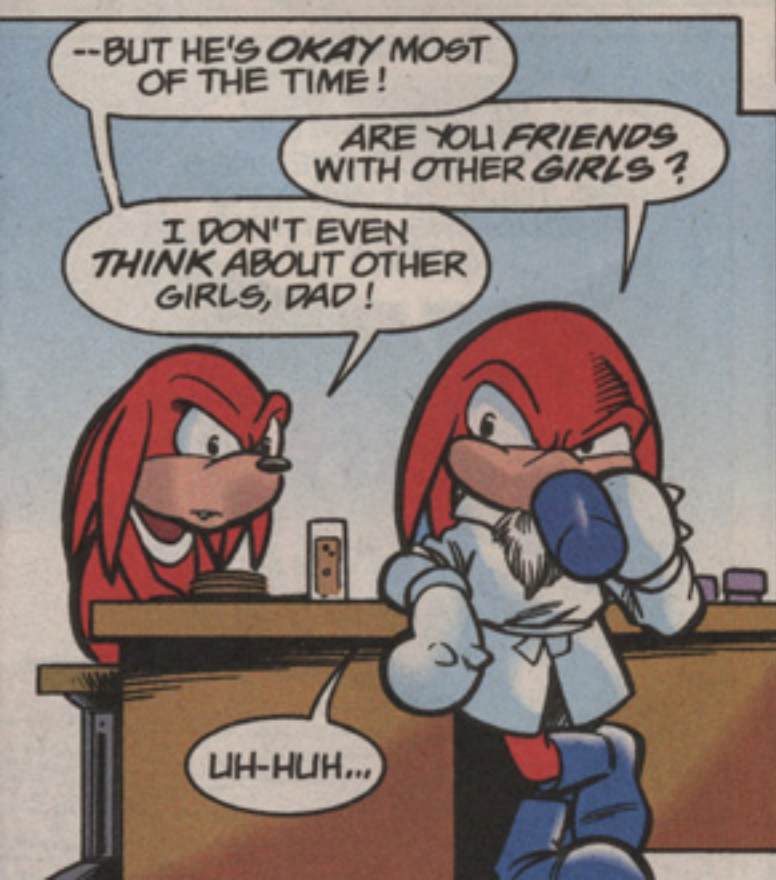
YOU OKAY,
SON?

YOU LOOK LIKE
SOMETHING'S ON
YOUR MIND!

I WAS WONDERING
ABOUT WHY BOYS
AND GIRLS GET
TOGETHER!

Splodges
H!

Umm--uhh--
WHY DO YOU WANT
TO KNOW?





NATURE HAS PROVIDED A MEANS FOR US TO RECOGNIZE OUR *LIFE PARTNER* FROM THE OPPOSITE SEX.

THAT MEANS BOTH THE BOY AND THE GIRL ARE *COMPATIBLE*, RIGHT?



IT *USUALLY* WORKS THAT WAY, YES!

THEN WHAT HAPPENED TO *YOU* AND MOM?



GOOD QUESTION!

I'VE OFTEN WONDERED THAT ONE MYSELF!

I GUESS EVEN THE *BEST* OF RELATIONSHIPS REQUIRE A LOT OF *WORK*!



I GET ALONG *GREAT* WITH THE *GUYS*!

IT'S *JULIE-SU* I HAVE MY *PROBLEMS* WITH!

WOULDN'T IT BE *EASIER*--



--IF *GUYS* HUNG AROUND WITH *GUYS* AND *GIRLS* STUCK TO *THEMSELVES*?

PROBABLY, BUT EVENTUALLY THEY WOULD WANT SOMETHING *MORE*!

MORE?



WHY DON'T WE FIGURE OUT WHAT TO DO ABOUT YOUR FEELINGS FOR *JULIE-SU* *BEFORE* DISCUSSING ANYTHING *MORE*?

"I SUPPOSE, BUT WHAT MORE COULD THERE BE?"

Y'KNOW, VECTOR, I THINK YOU'RE ALL MOUTH WHEN IT COMES TO GIRLS!

SEZ YOU!

YOU'RE THE ONE WHO TALKS ABOUT THEM ALL THE TIME!

THIS CROC DOES MORE THAN JUST TALK!

ALL RIGHT, MISTER BIG MOUTH--
LET'S PUT UP OR SHUT UP!

WADDYA RAPPIN' ABOUT?

YOU SAY YOU'RE HOT STUFF--

-- SO LET'S SEE YOU ASK OUT A GIRL-- ANY GIRL WITHIN EYESIGHT-- TO GO OUT ON A DATE WITH YOU!

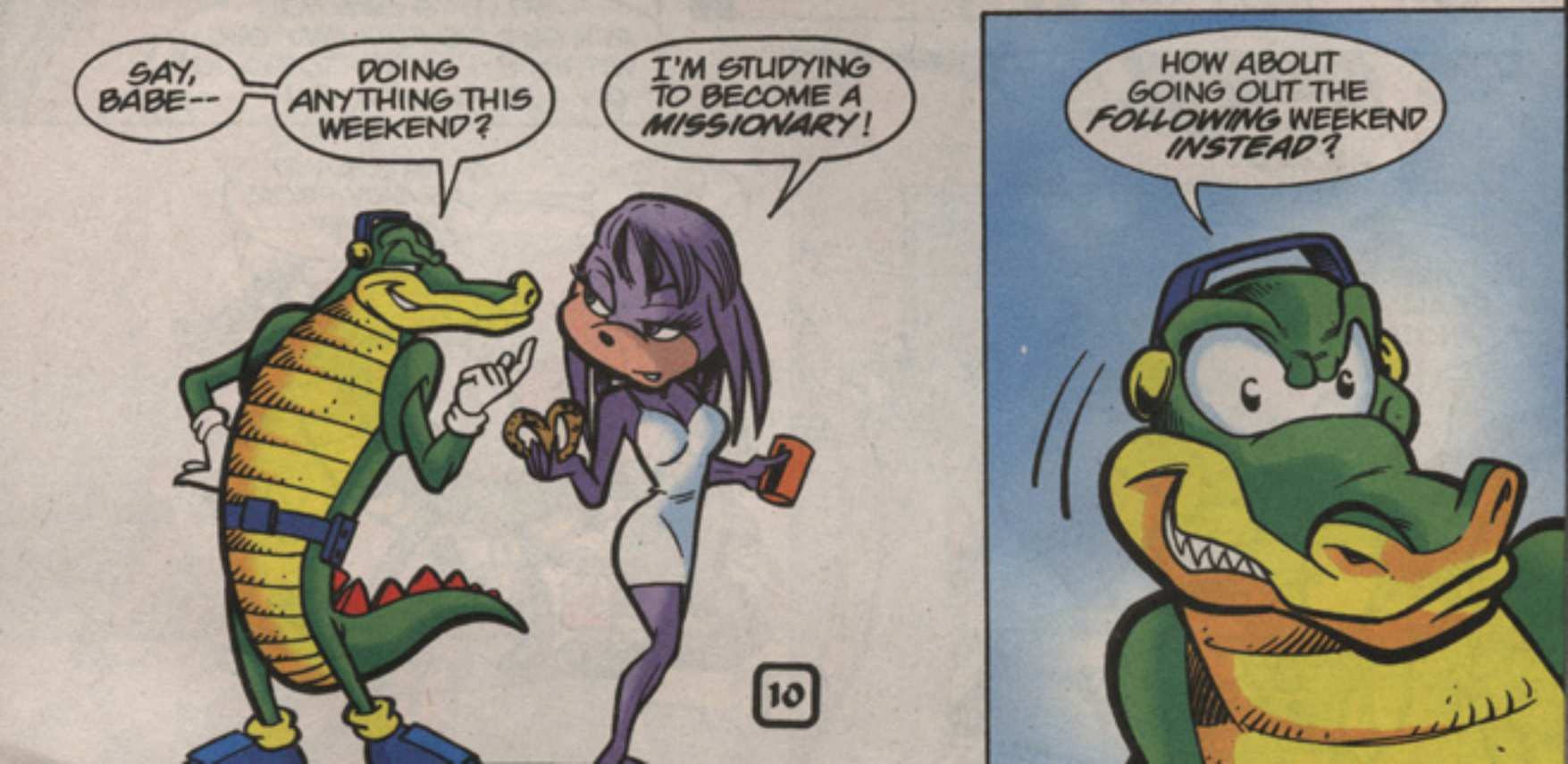
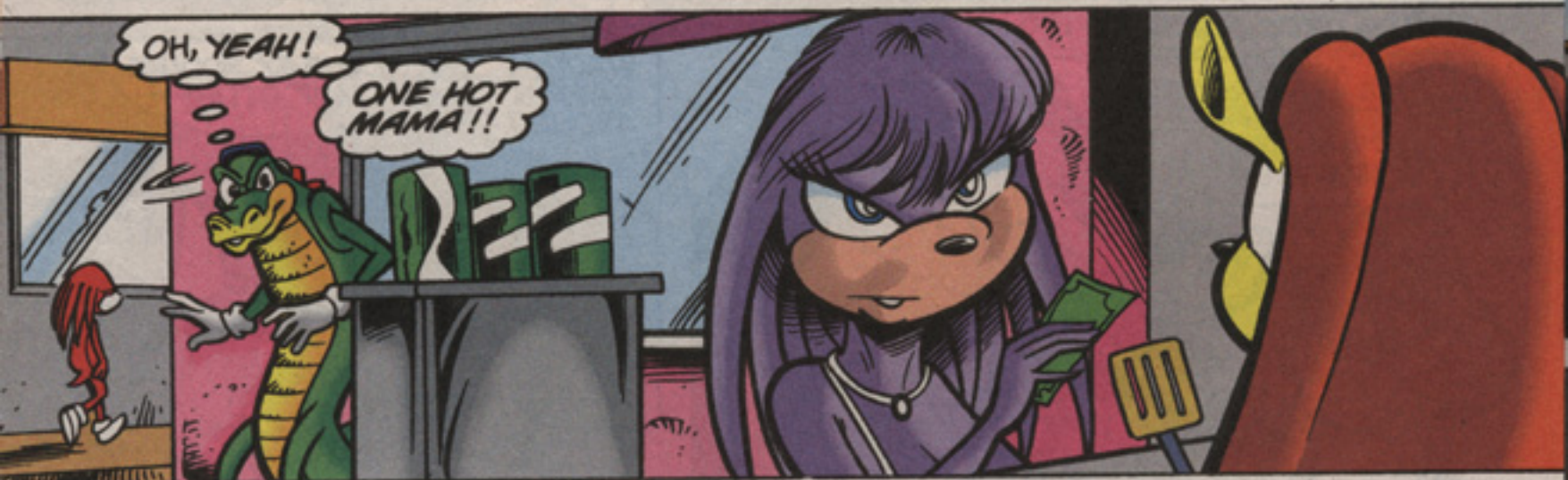
HUH?

YOU HEARD ME!

OR ARE YOU REALLY JUST ANOTHER--

WAIT HERE!

WATCH AND LEARN FROM THE MAN!



"YOU'LL BE THE ONE
MISSING OUT, BABE!"

YEEUCHH!

I'M DEFINITELY
HAVING A
BAD HAIR DAY!

THAT'S IT!

I HAVE TO
GET OUT!

I'M STARTING TO
SOUND AS SHALLOW
AS SOME OF THE DITZES
I RUN INTO.

PERHAPS A SELF-
IMPROVEMENT COURSE
WOULD HELP!

IF ONLY
I KNEW WHAT
I WANTED TO
IMPROVE!

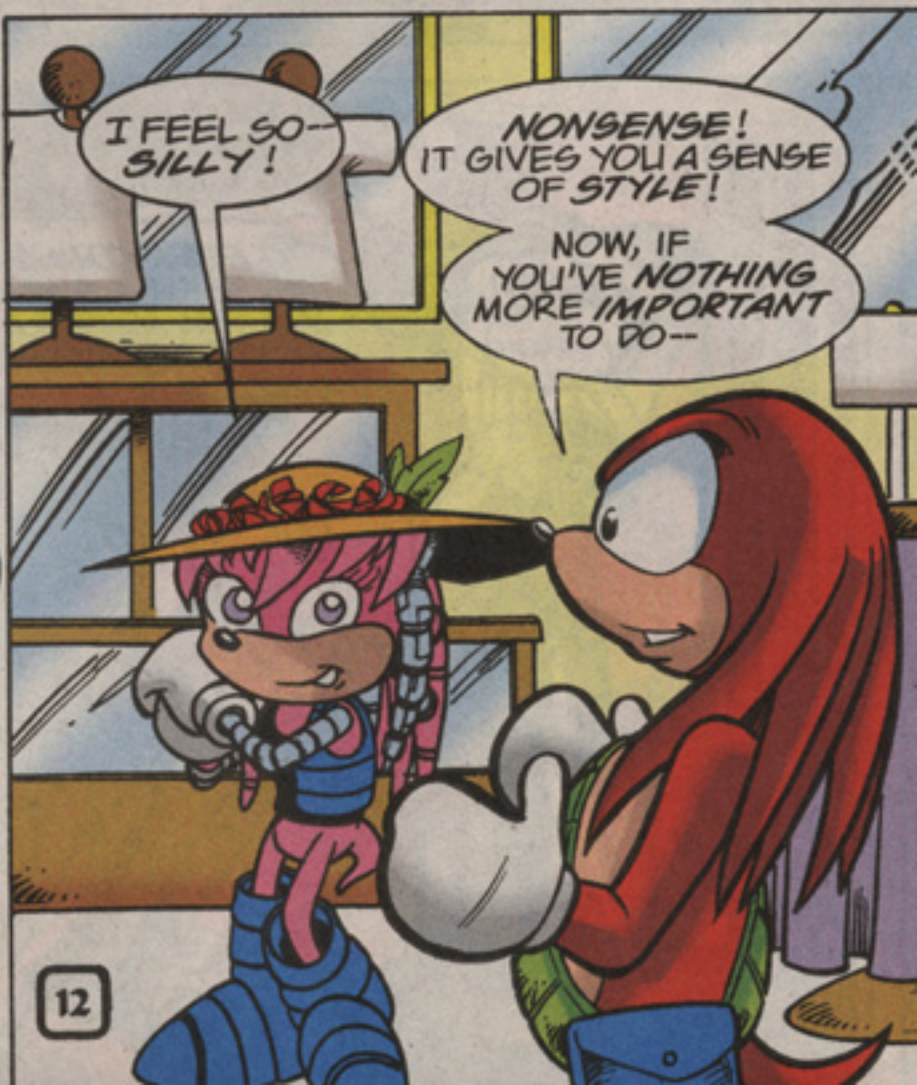
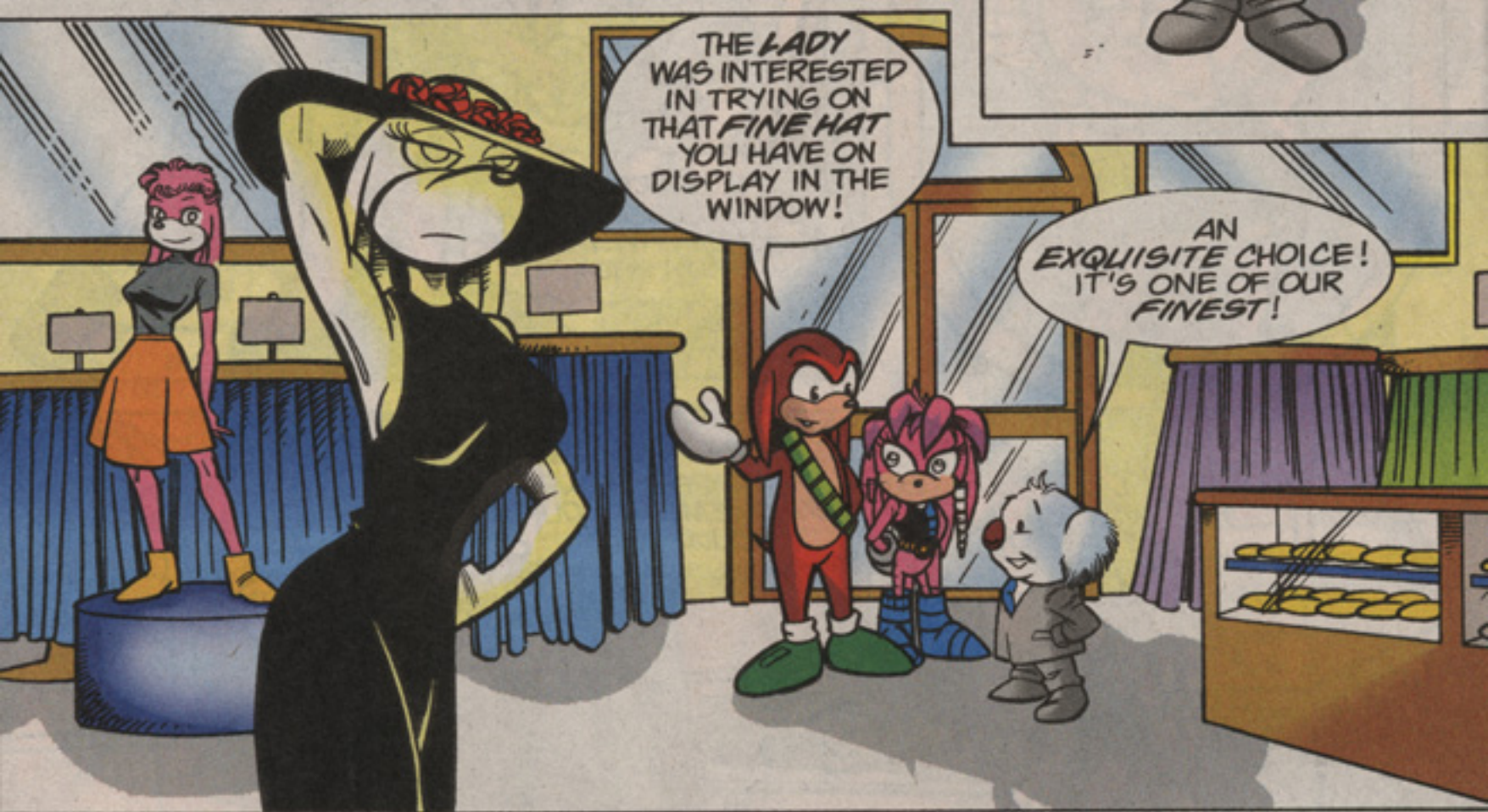
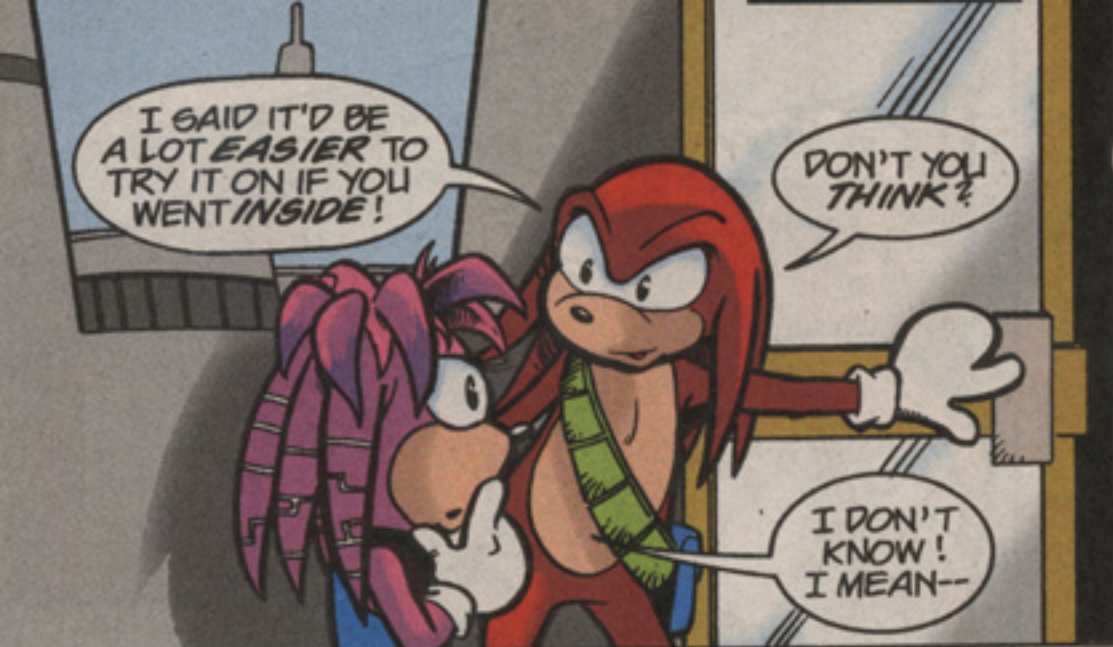
MAYBE I'M JUST NOT
HAVING ENOUGH FUN
IN MY LIFE!

EVERYTHING
HAS BEEN A SERIOUS
MATTER AS FAR AS I
CAN RECALL!

WHY DON'T
YOU TRY IT
ON?

HUH?

WHAT
DID YOU
SAY?



"-- WOULD YOU CARE TO JOIN ME FOR LUNCH?"



I WANTED TO SEE HOW YOU WERE DOING, LAD!



SINCE YOUR FATHER IS PERFORMING HIS MORNING ROUTINE, I THOUGHT NOW WOULD BE AS GOOD A TIME AS ANY!



THAT'S JUST IT! I DON'T KNOW HOW I'M DOING!

ON THE ONE HAND, I'M HAPPY TO BE WITH DAD!

ON THE OTHER, I KEEP THINKING OF JULIE-SU!



IN LOVE, ARE WE?

MY BOY, THERE ARE NO SUCH THINGS AS EASY ANSWERS!

HAVE YOU DISCUSSED THIS WITH LOCKE?



YEAH, BUT I DON'T THINK HE WAS TOO THRILLED ABOUT IT!

THAT'S ONLY NATURAL!

WHAT PARENT ENJOYS TALKING ABOUT MATTERS THAT DEAL WITH GROWING UP?





HEY! EVERYBODY!
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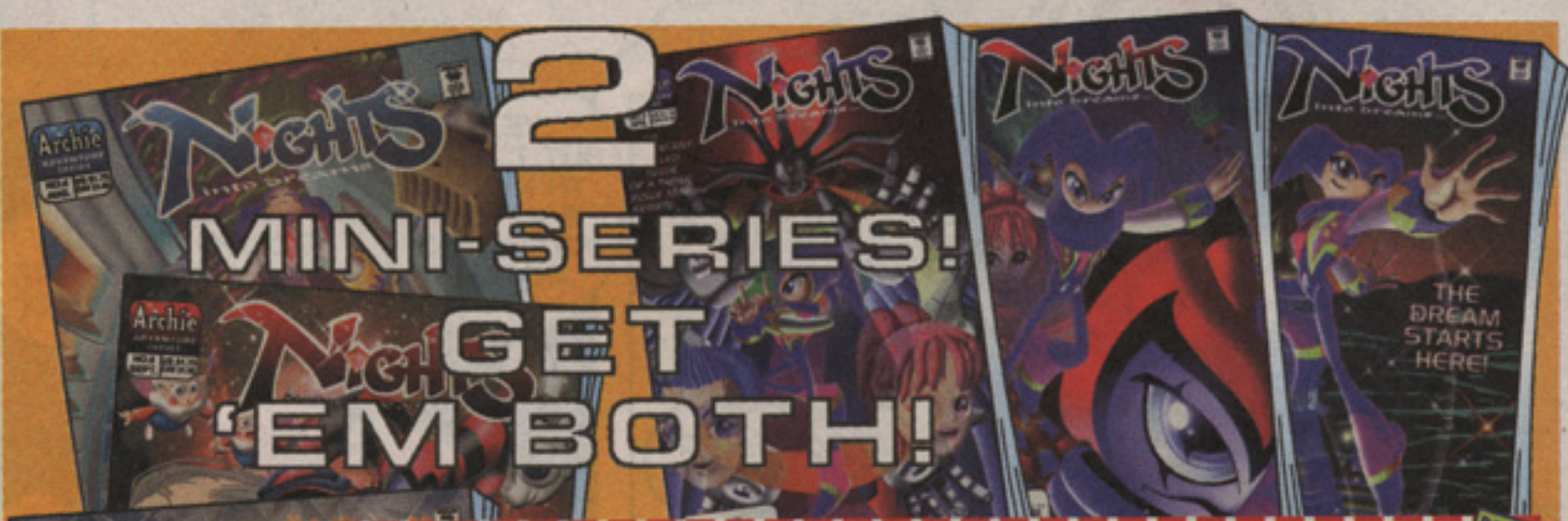
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KNOW YOUR HEROES! "THE ORIGIN OF THE JAGUAR"

BY: PAUL CASTIGLIA & KEN PENDERS

DEEP IN EXOTIC LANDS, FAMED ZOOLOGIST **RALPH HARDY** WAS HAVING A BLAST ON A LIVELY ARCHEOLOGICAL DIG...

I DON'T KNOW WHY HOLLYWOOD KEEPS MAKING ALL THOSE **KILLER DINOSAUR** MOVIES--

THESE GUYS DON'T **SCARE** ME A BIT!

YEAH -- IT'S **AMAZING** HOW THEY **MELLOW** WITH AGE!

THE DIG GOT EVEN **LIVELIER** LITERALLY-- WHEN A GIANT **ROAR** AND THE SOUND OF **THUNDEROUS FOOTSTEPS** FILLED THE AIR!

WHAT WERE YOU SAYING ABOUT **MELLOW**?

ALL I KNOW IS IT **RHYMES** WITH "**YELLOW**"-- SO LET'S **HIGH-TAIL** IT OUT OF HERE, **QUICK!** TO THE TEMPLE!

ONCE INSIDE THE TEMPLE, THE NATURALLY CURIOUS **RALPH** WANDERS AWAY FROM THE OTHERS, INTO A NARROW CORRIDOR...

THESE **HIEROGLYPHICS** -- THEY SHOW THE MONSTER TERRORIZING THE **INCAS!** SOMEHOW IT'S **SURVIVED** ALL THESE YEARS!

RALPH HEARS A "**CLINK**" BENEATH HIS FEET, AND DISCOVERS A STRANGE **BELT** WITH AN ANCIENT INSCRIPTION ON ITS **BUCKLE**...

THE INSCRIPTION READS: "HE WHO LOVES THE **ANIMAL KINGDOM** MAY WEAR THIS BELT AND BE TRANSFORMED INTO A HUMAN **JAGUAR!**"

HAH! I LOVE ANCIENT **SUPERSTITIONS!** OH WELL, IT WILL GO WELL WITH MY OUTFIT!

BUT **RALPH HARDY** LEARNED THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN **SUPERSTITION** AND **DESTINY** THAT DAY, AS HE WAS ACTUALLY **TRANSFORMED** INTO A SUPERHUMAN BEING! HE RESCUED HIS FRIENDS FROM THE OMINOUS SERPENT, AND WENT ON TO **FIGHT** THE EVILS OF THE WORLD-- WITH THE **SAVAGE SPIRIT** OF A **JAGUAR!**

I HAVE BEEN CALLED TO USE THESE **MAGNIFICENT POWERS** TO **PROTECT** ALL OF NATURE'S **INNOCENT CREATURES!**

I'LL START BY **ELIMINATING** ONE OF ITS **DEADLIEST!**

PARENTS
PREFER THEIR
CHILDREN TO STAY
CHILDREN SO THEY
CAN PROTECT THEM
FROM LIFE'S HARSH
REALITIES!

AND LOVE
CAN BE ONE OF
THE HARSHTEST TO
DEAL WITH!

SO WHAT
DO I DO?

MY BOY, IF YOU
RECOGNIZE EVERYTHING
IN LIFE HAS CONSEQUENCES
AND ARE PREPARED TO DEAL
WITH THEM--

--YOU
MAKE CHOICES
AND LIVE WITH
THEM!

HERE'S HOPING
I CAN EXPLAIN
THIS ONE TO MY DAD
LATER!

LET'S
GO!

BELIEVE IT OR
NOT, KNUCKLES--

--YOUR FATHER
WAS YOUNG ONCE
AS WELL....

BAMF!

KNUCKLES?

"NOW WHERE DID THAT
BOY MAKE OFF TO?"

THIS IS
NOT COOL!

IF I DON'T
SCORE I'LL NEVER
HEAR THE END OF IT
FROM ESPY!



HUH?



I WAS ASKING
IF YOU WANTED
ANYTHING!

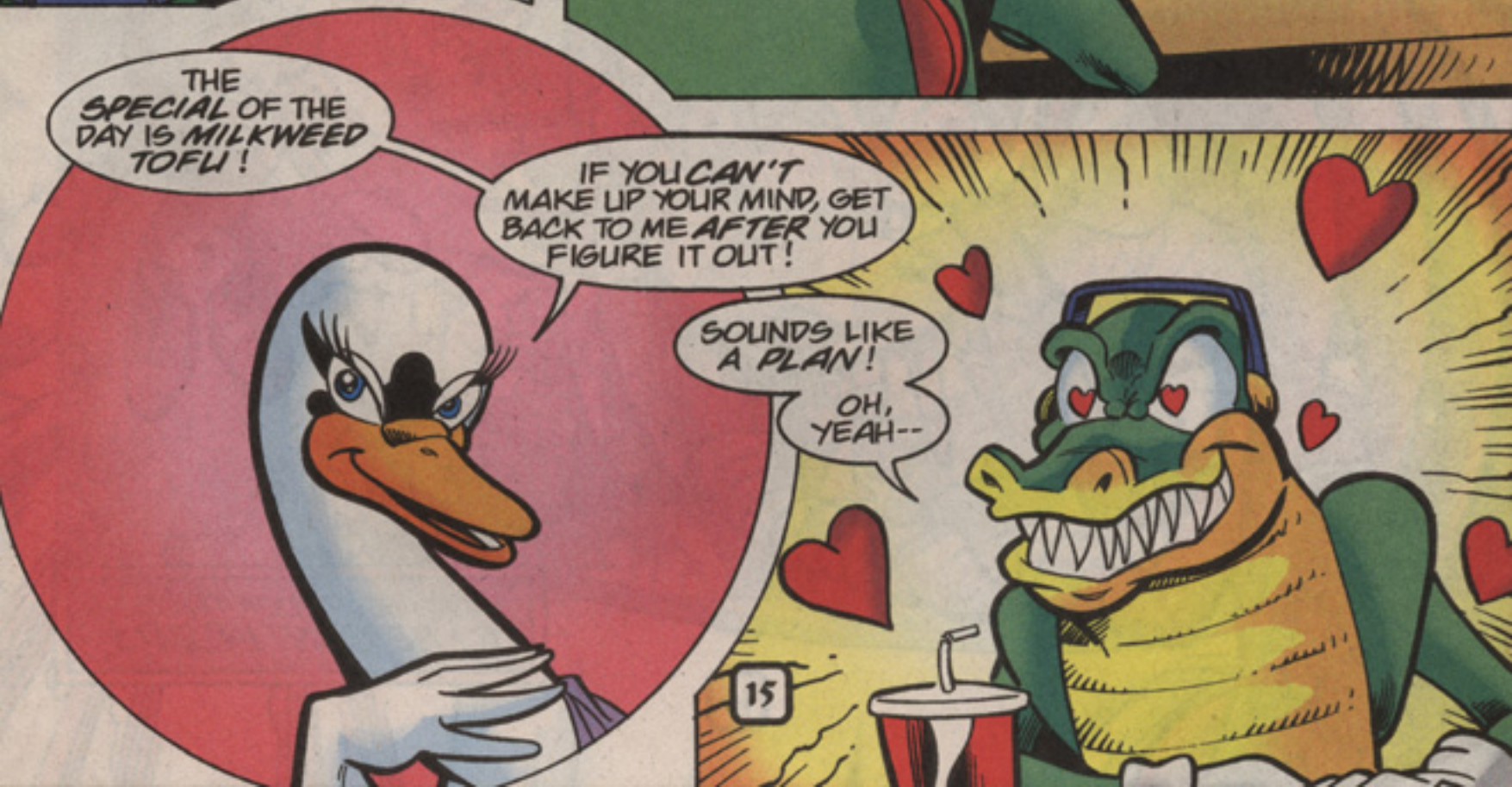
DEPENDS
WHAT'S ON THE
MENU!

THE
SPECIAL OF THE
DAY IS MILKWEED
TOFU!

IF YOU CAN'T
MAKE UP YOUR MIND, GET
BACK TO ME AFTER YOU
FIGURE IT OUT!

SOUNDS LIKE
A PLAN!

OH,
YEAH--



"--WHAT DO YOU HAVE
FOR *DESSERT*?"

BISTRO

SO TELL ME,
JULIE-SU, IS THERE
ANYONE *SPECIAL*
IN YOUR LIFE AT
THE MOMENT?

THAT'S A
TOUGH ONE,
RAYNOR!

I WISH
I KNEW!

BISTRO

TALK ABOUT POOR TIMING...
TO BE CONTINUED!

MIGHTY THE ARMADILLO

112:

Friend In Need

WHAT BEGINS AS A ROUTINE DAY ABRUPTLY CHANGES UPON THE ARRIVAL OF A VISITOR AT MIGHTY'S DEN, LOCATED AT ROCKY HILL ON THE EAST SIDE OF THE FLOATING ISLAND...

BOY, DOES THIS EVER BRING BACK MEMORIES!

I THOUGHT IT WOULD--THAT'S WHY I SOUGHT YOU OUT!

SO WHAT DO YOU NEED ME FOR IF YOU KNOW WHAT THIS IS ?!

WRITER: KEN PENDERS
PENCILER: MANNY GALAN
INKER: ANDREW PEPOY
COLORIST: BARRY GROSSMAN
LETTERER: VICKIE WILLIAMS
EDITOR: J.F. GABRIE

SIMPLE! I NEED YOU FOR YOUR MUSCLE!

IT DOESN'T TELL ME WHY I SHOULD GO WITH YOU!

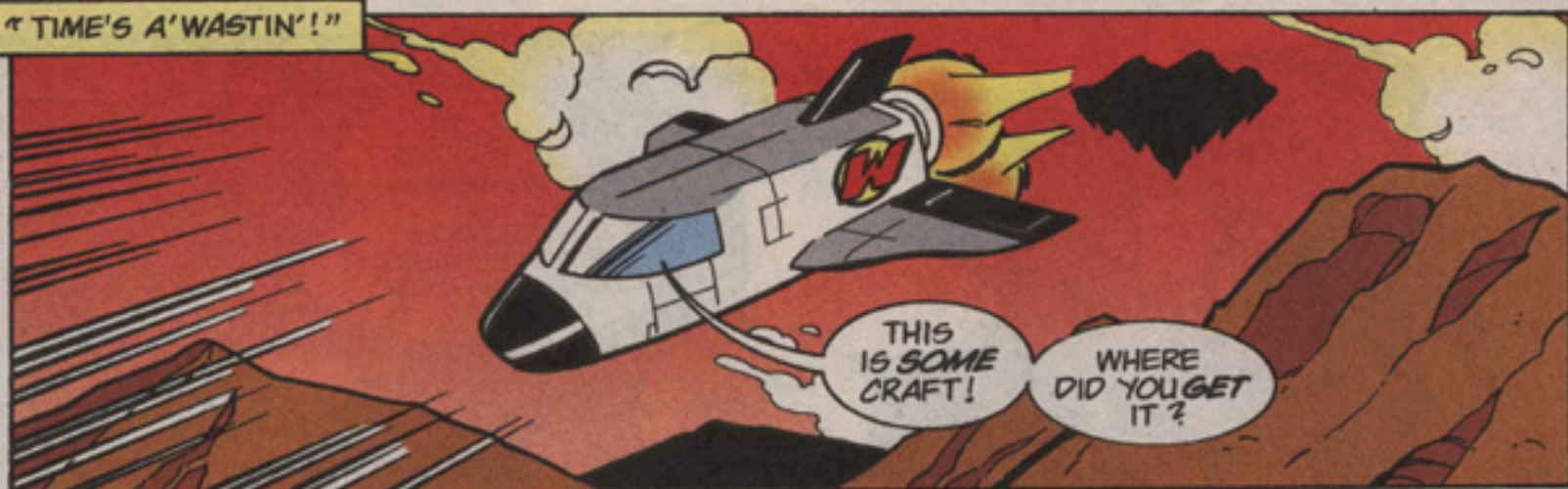
SINCE YOU NEED CONVINCING--

--IS THIS REASON ENOUGH?

WHAT THE--?!?



"TIME'S A'WASTIN'!"



THIS IS SOME CRAFT!

WHERE DID YOU GET IT?

I BOUGHT IT AT THE FIVE AND GEMSTONE!

DOES IT REALLY MATTER?

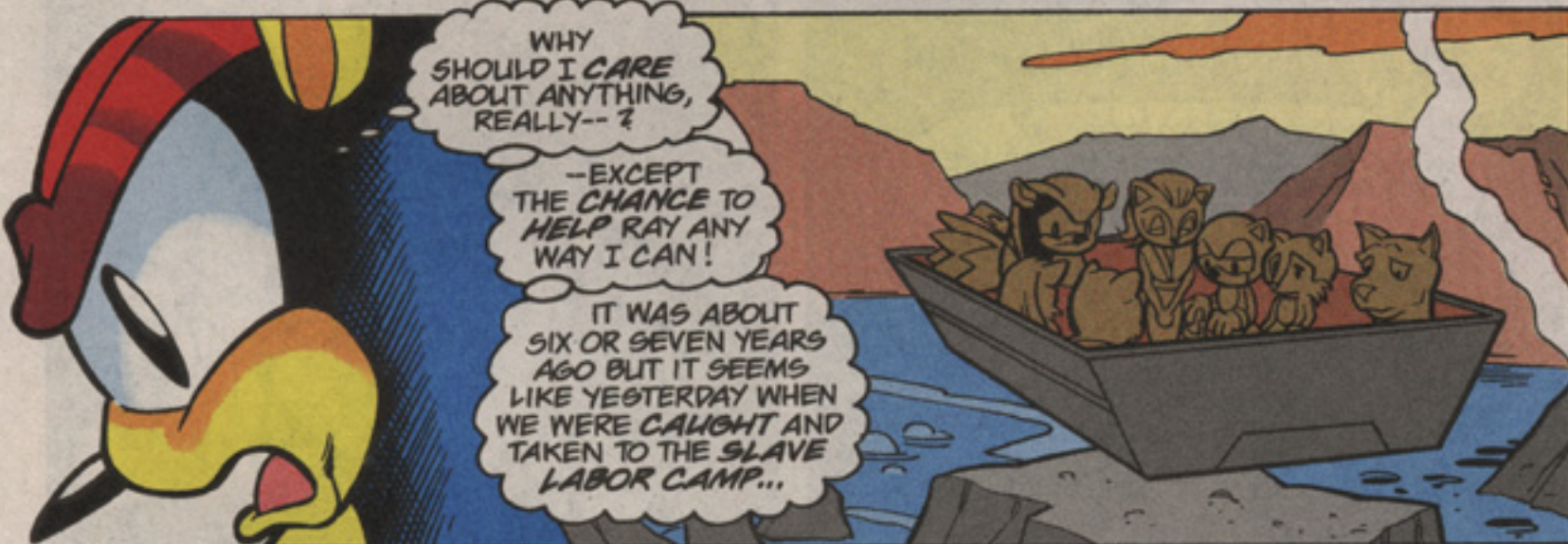


I GUESS NOT!

WHY SHOULD I CARE ABOUT ANYTHING, REALLY--?

--EXCEPT THE CHANCE TO HELP RAY ANY WAY I CAN!

IT WAS ABOUT SIX OR SEVEN YEARS AGO BUT IT SEEMS LIKE YESTERDAY WHEN WE WERE CAUGHT AND TAKEN TO THE SLAVE LABOR CAMP...



"I REMEMBER SEEING RAY FOR THE FIRST TIME, SHAKING LIKE A LEAF, BUT THAT DIDN'T STOP HIM FROM SHOWING CONSIDERATION FOR OTHERS..."



H-H-HERE!
H-H-HAVE M-M-MY
S-S-SEAT!

HEY, LITTLE FELLER, TAKE IT EASY!

I-I-I'M T-T-TRYING T-T-TO!

NO REASON FOR FEAR--





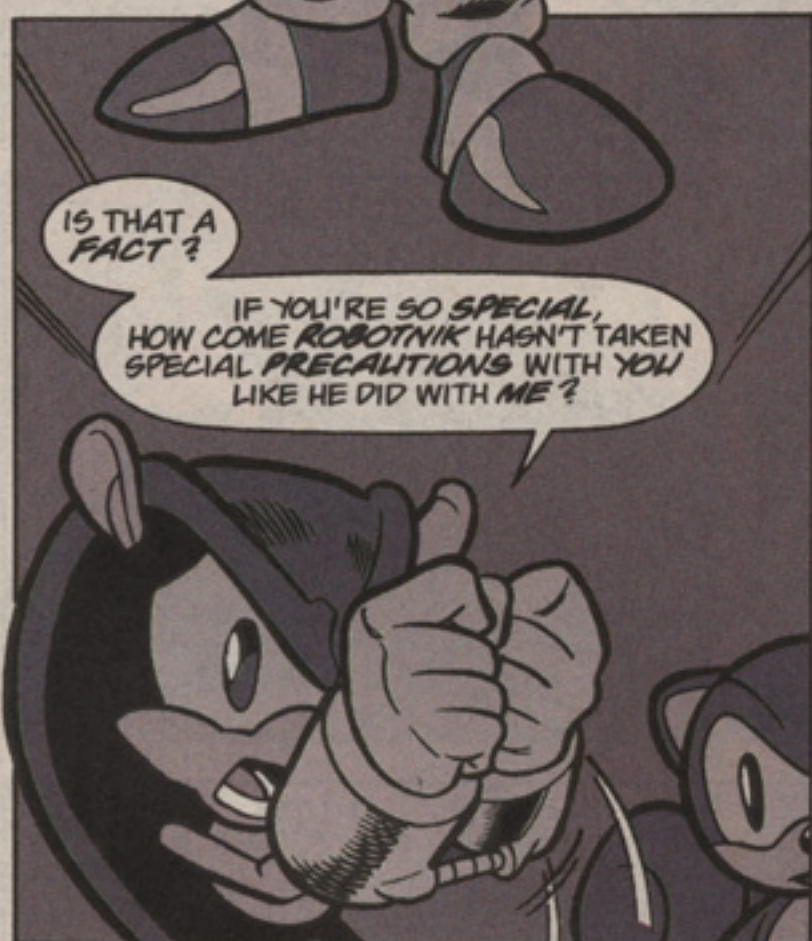
--'CAUSE
THE HEDGEHOG
IS HERE!

SORRY
IF I'M *NOT*
IMPRESSED--

--AS I DON'T
HAVE THE FAINTEST
IDEA WHO YOU
ARE!

IT'S
OKAY IF
YOU'RE
CLUELESS
NOW, PAL--

--BUT
YOU *WON'T*
BE ONCE I GET
JUICIN'!



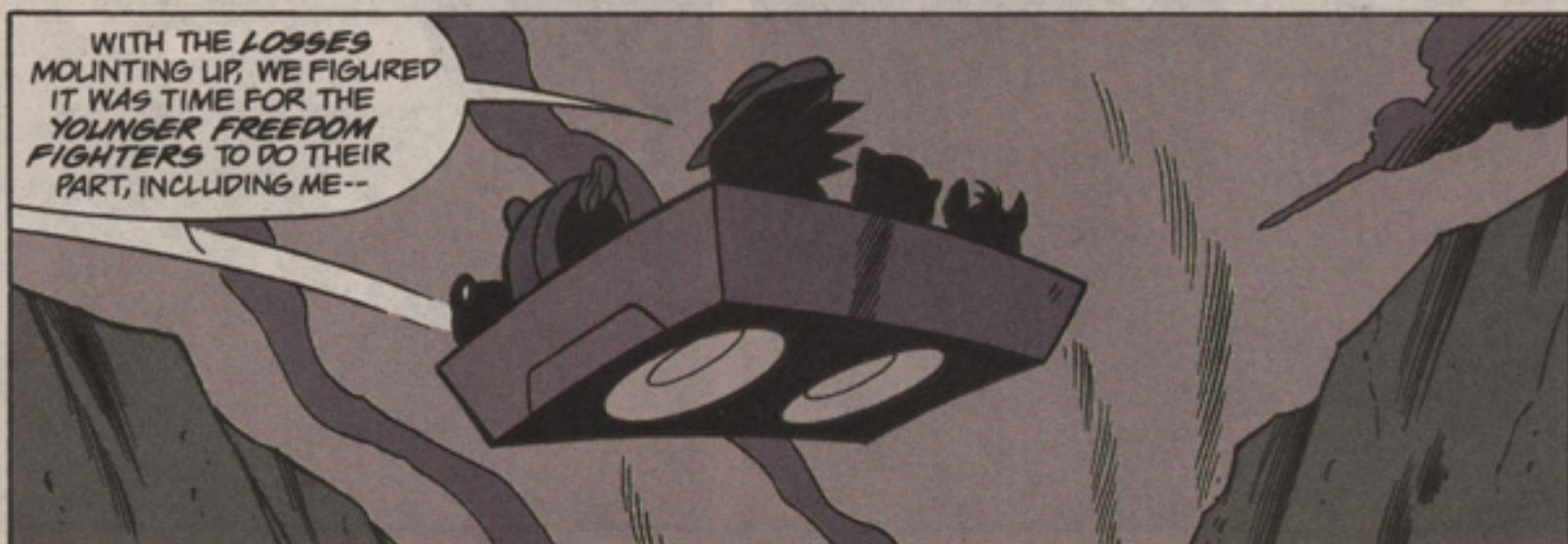
IS THAT A
FACT?

IF YOU'RE SO *SPECIAL*,
HOW COME *ROBOTNIK* HASN'T TAKEN
SPECIAL *PRECAUTIONS* WITH YOU
LIKE HE DID WITH *ME*?

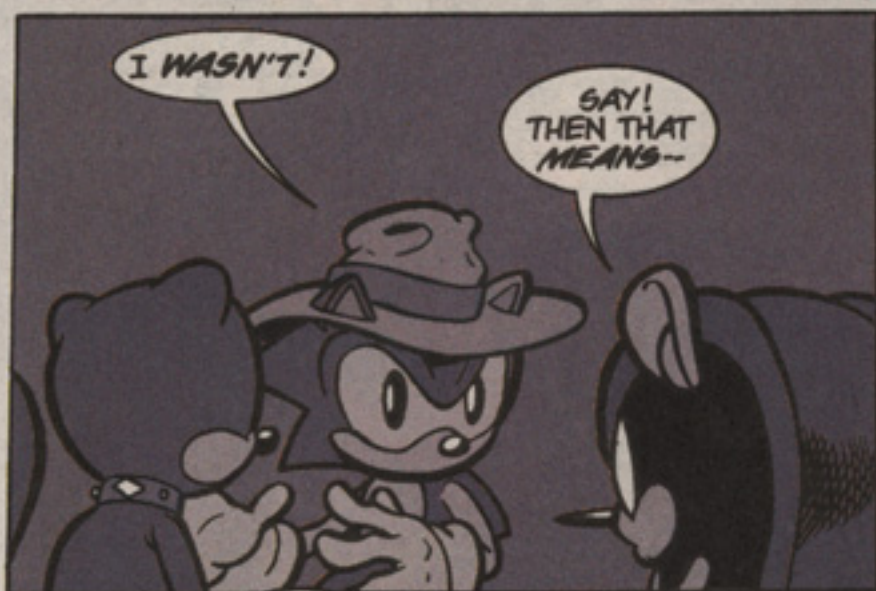


OL' ROBO-BUTT
HAS PROBABLY
FORGOTTEN ALL
ABOUT ME!

OUR
ELDERS HAVE
BEEN CARRYING
THE *FIGHT* UNTIL
RECENTLY!



WITH THE *LOSSES*
MOUNTING UP, WE FIGURED
IT WAS TIME FOR THE
YOUNGER FREEDOM
FIGHTERS TO DO THEIR
PART, INCLUDING ME--



NO!
NOTHING AT
ALL!

I WAS JUST
THINKING!

FORTUNATELY,
IT'S NOT YOUR
BRAIN CELLS
I NEED UP TO
SPEED--

-- ONLY YOUR
BRAWN!

READY TO LIVE
UP TO YOUR PART OF
THE BARGAIN?

YEAH--BUT ANY
SIGN THINGS AREN'T
ON THE UP-AND-UP--

-- AND WE
MIGHT HAVE TO
RENEGOTIATE!

BOY, DOES
THIS PLACE LOOK
SPOOKIER THAN
THE LAST TIME I
WAS HERE!

THE NATIVES AREN'T FRIENDLY
IN THESE PARTS!

THAT'S
ANOTHER
REASON
YOU'RE WITH
ME!

HOLD IT!
SOMEONE IS
COMING!

IT'S ONLY--

FIONA

YOU'RE--

--ALIVE?

NO THANKS
TO YOU OR YOUR
FRIENDS!

COME TO
MAKE AMENDS,
MIGHTY?

NEXT: LONG FORGOTTEN SECRETS
AND OTHER BURIED TREASURES!

FISTFUL

OF



OFF PANEL



by Gallagher, Manak & Harvo



THIS JUST IN!



On Tuesday, March 16, 1999 at precisely 2:00pm, Jacen Casey Galán was born. He weighed in at 8½ pounds and measured in at a whopping 21 inches. Let's give the proud (and now extremely tired) parents, Manny and Erika Galán, our heartiest congratulations, Guardian-style!

On another note: Saturday, June 5, 1999, Andrew Pepoy and Pam Eklund will be doing a Sonic & Knuckles signing at Graham Crackers Comics in the suburbs of Chicago, IL. If you're in the area, look out for them at 1271 Rickert Drive in Naperville from 11am to 1pm, at 1207 East Butterfield Road in Wheaton from 1:30pm to 3pm, and at 108 East Main Street in St. Charles from 3:30pm to 4:30pm.

J.F. GABRIE
Editor / Art Director

Catch you on the flip side!

Send letters to:

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Re: KNUCKLES THE ECHIDNA #22

Dear Knuckles,

I just got issue #22 and I was just wondering, on page 22 there are three guys there. I know who the one in the front is, but who are the others? I would also like to know Knuckles' relatives from Hawking to Edmund. And lastly, are Espio and Valdez related? Well that's it.

Ryan Meehan
Convent Station, NJ

The other two were the robot candidate, Benedict and the cyborg Dark Legionaire, Xenin. There was more on Knux's relatives in Knuckles #25 and there will be more to come. More on the Espio & Valdez connection in an upcoming story.

Konnichiwa Knuckles-sama!

Here is a major subject of question: Should Knuckles and Julie-Su be a couple? Personally, I say yes. Knux needs a good female companion at his side. A word to Vector concerning Julie-Su: Get over it! She's proven herself loyal already! Some people! On another subject: What color is Grandfather Spectre? Is he red like most other echidnas or is he black? I can't really tell. Oh, and I think Bunnie and Knuckles should have a crossover mini-series or special together. They are both my all-time favorite characters in both comics. I must congratulate you on the awesome

story line! It is much more serious than the Sonic comics. Till next issue! Sayonara!

Sarabeth
"Bunnie-chan" Collins
(age 14)
Garrison, TX

Uh, oh -- Sarabeth is starting a discussion pool. Anybody care to agree or disagree with her? Spectre's red. The black are the shadows from his cowl. Check out Bunnie in a solo story in Sonic Super special #11.

Dear Knuckles,

How's it going, Rad Red? I'm doing pretty cool here! How are the Chaotix? Well, hope they're doing good. What's the deal with Julie-Su? Is she your new best friend? I obviously don't like her. Plus, my theory is that they got rid of Charmy just to make room for her! Okay, back to business. Two questions: 1) So what's up with the Dingoes? Are they mad at the echidnas for something? 2) Is that woman Julie-Su's mother? If she is, she should talk Julie-Su into coming back! Stay cool, Raddy!

Toni Ferraro
Aston, PA

The Chaotix are having their own back-up features starting with this issue. 1) The Dingoes and Echidnas have never seen eye to eye on things for as long as they can remember. 2) More on the mysterious female echidna in a

Julie-Su solo story in Sonic Super Special #11.

Dear Knuckles,

I loved Knuckles #22!!! The artwork was great and Dimitri has reappeared. I have a couple of questions though: 1) Where did Tobor and Kragok go? 2) Will he ever come back? 3) Would you marry Julie-Su in Knuckles #100? Or some other big number? 4) How did Dimitri stay alive before he became a cyborg? Oh and also: I LOVE the artwork of Spaz, Harvo and Penders! They are soooooooo good which makes the covers (or anything else for that matter) look SUPER GROOVY!!! Keep up the good work.

wallax@erinet.com

Jim & Harvo give their thanks on the art compliment. 1) & 2) A mystery to be answered another time. 3) Time will tell. 4) The Dark Legion made him a cyborg to keep him alive. They almost didn't make it in time.

Well, that's it for this month. Thank you all for your comments. See you in thirty. And remember...

KEEP COOL!

Cover by Patrick Spaziante and Ken Penders. Colors and separations by Darrin Moore and Heroic Age.

COMING ATTRACTIONS

In one week: "The Truth Is Out There" When Robotnik's satellites link together to form a mega-sized space base, Sonic and the Freedom Fighters are set to investigate.

That is, if they can get off the ground-- for just as they are about to leave, they receive a distress signal! Story by Karl Bollers with art by Steven Butler and Pam Eklund. Also: "Tales of the Great War, Pt. 2." By Ken Penders, Art Mawhinney and Jim Amash!

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG #73 on sale late May 1999!



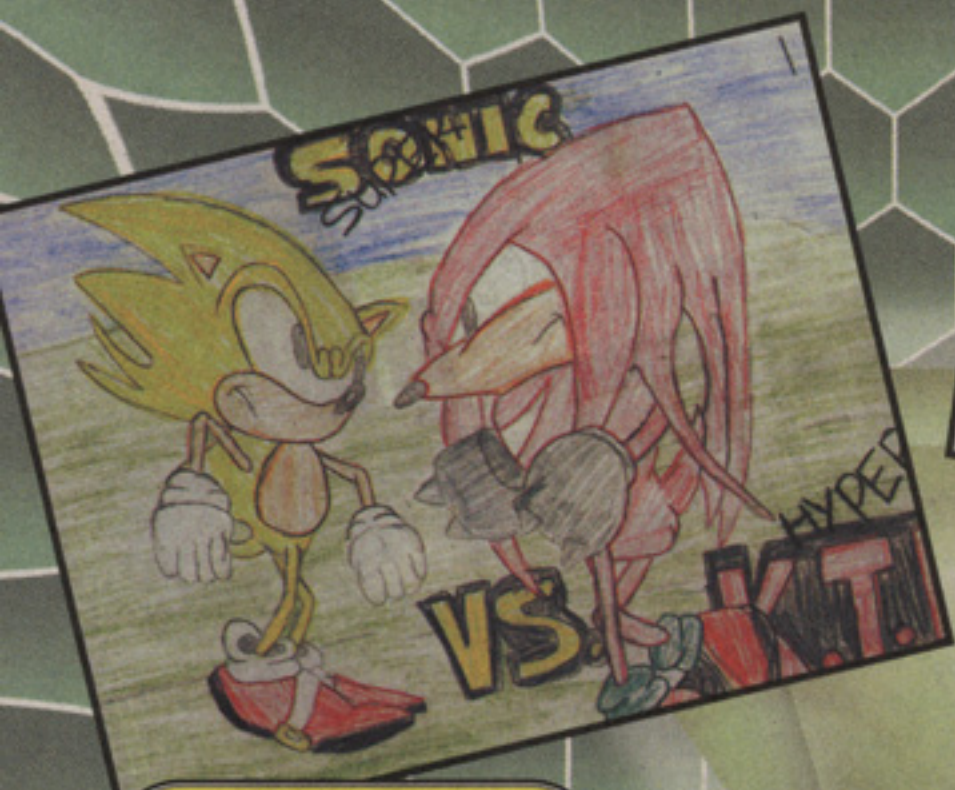
Next Month: He's faced some of the most dangerous villains the Floating Island has ever seen, but can even Knuckles surmount the hardest task he's

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KNUCKLES THE ECHIDNA #27 on sale early June 1999!



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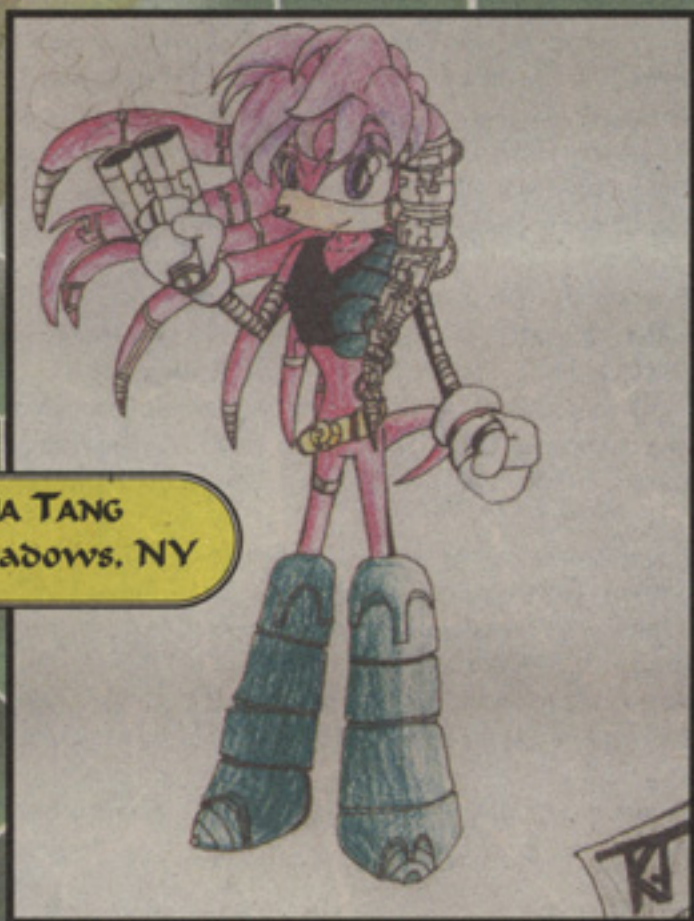
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